

# THE HEART OF NIGHT WIND

A STORY OF THE GREAT NORTH WEST

By VINGIE E. ROE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TRAY WALTERS

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### The Red Death.

So they were left, these two—the East and the West—alone upon the mighty pyre of the jumbled peaks. Only the forbidding spine of the Hog Back, running like a great thin blade high between the red surf creeping at its base, carried a passage out of the roaring death. Siletz had planned that the splendid black should make it first.

Now she turned back to the two men she loved—the Preacher, silent under the shielding ferns with his Bible and his fute, Sandry prone upon the earth, his face in the pine needles. She passed him and knelt beside the other. Her eyes were dim with the old look of emotion. She bared the white face and gazed long upon it. The call of blood had ever held her to this man mysteriously, though both were ignorant of the vital tie between them, the Preacher because of the dreamy blank in his mind since the tragedy of that far-off day, Siletz because Kolawmie, wise beyond his generation, had seen how blood takes to its own, even at its cost. He had loved her mother and had tried to make her Indian, though she was white, a wife of the old frontier, and he had seen her break her heart and die.

Therefore, after silent hours by the Great Waters he had accepted the mandate of Destiny and had taken the babe of the Broken Sign and given her to the only white woman he would trust, Ma Dally, who took her with few questions when she saw how Siletz looked for the first and last time consciously upon her own. Presently she leaned over and kissed him softly, replaced the ferns and rose.

Beside Sandry she stopped, stood, a moment gazing around at the pine boles that loomed like fearful ghosts in the smoke, and sat down beside him, tucking her feet with the age-old motion of the blanket-wearers beneath her skirt, so deeply had she absorbed the ways of the dusky people whom she loved.

She did not speak. When at last the man, his face drawn out of all semblance to itself, raised his eyes to her she was calm as the hills before the fire. He looked at her, raising himself on his elbow, looked long while Knowledge was born in him.

So this was the West, the world he had once thought so unbearable, this was the wild, the untaught, the crude—this slim forest creature who served him without question because he had bought her with a kiss, who asked nothing, who stayed by him to die because she loved him! Who still believed in him despite that other's declaration that she was his promised wife! And yonder went his world, his cultured, polished East, riding down to life and safety, her love forgotten in the face of danger! Yonder went what he had thought "the best blood of the land!"

Nay, he had been wrong! It was here beside him, its feet tucked under it in meekness, the savagery hidden in its dim black eyes! The last barrier went down in Walter Sandry, the last last strand of prejudice broke with a snap. He rolled near and caught the hem of her ragged skirt.

"Little Siletz!" he said brokenly, "oh, little Siletz! What am I that you should have done this thing!"

She looked down at him and the rare smile curled up the corners of the lips above the sign.

"You are my man," she said softly, "the king of the whole world! You are the light on the waters, Sandry, the mist in the valleys, the path to the feet of God! Only I have lost my footing thereon."

A tender wistfulness rang in her voice. She fell silent, after her fashion when great emotions stirred her. Sandry's eyes smarted under blinding tears. His chin was quivering with the mighty emotions that swelled his heart to bursting and his scorched and blackened hands clung, trembling, to Siletz's skirt.

"See, little one! I come at last to your 'God above the sea!' Take my hand that we may go together, and pray."

But the girl raised a calm face to the unspeakable heavens—a face in which all struggle had been stilled, where there was neither hope nor fear, only great content.

"No," she said, "I cannot pray for I have no soul. I have lost it as the price of love."

The man could not speak and she answered the look in his face.

"We will go together. You have had no God. I have forsaken mine. We will go to hell—it is the right law—the sure and just wage of sin," she was falling into the stately Bible language, taking on the simple dignity of the Preacher's way and manner, "but we will go together. I give my soul to you."

Bitting his aching lips Sandry rose on his knees and gathered her into his arms. He held her to him with all the yearning of his breaking heart and buried his face in her throat.

The dull rumbling again broke through the howling of the storm of fire that was fast surging its way to the cup among the peaks.

Behold the Hog Back running out from the jumbled peaks, a blade between the surges far below. Behold a great black horse, carrying a double burden, staggering blindly.

See a mammoth mongrel who tugs at the rein tied to his collar and strains to follow the dim trail which calls only to the heavy muzzle hugging the earth.

And listen! A woman's golden voice, shrill with exquisite agony.

"Help! Help! My God! Oh, my God! I'm choking! I can't breathe! Save me! Save me! Save me! You great brute, can't you do something?" In her wildness she turned and struck the man behind her and she never knew that her beautiful hand was red with the blood of his wound.

As Hampden looked into her face, distorted like a maniac's, his hard eyes softened. He knew how slim the odds that they would beat the flames to the foot of the trail. Also he knew in that moment that they would never make it.

"Yes," he said, swiftly, "there is something I can do." He slid off the horse. With heavy hands he seized the skirt of the woman's gown and ripped it from her, tearing it into strips which he wound about her and fastened securely to the saddle horn.

"When you come to the Hog Back shut your eyes and don't look down. He'll take you all right. Now—Good-bye."

He stepped back, then caught her arm for one fleeting second.

"Poppy girl," he said hoarsely, "kiss me—just once. I'm done for, but I love you. My God! How I love you!"

But Poppy Ordway shook his hand loose and shrieked to the horse, which started forward with renewed heart under the lighter load.

Out upon the two-foot blade of the Hog Back crept Coosnah, his long body flattened to the rock, his pale eyes contracted to pin-points. Black Bolt stopped at the awful point where the spine left the mountain, trembling in every limb, and snorted with fear. Far below in the sea of smoke long red streamers licked up toward them and blazing torches lighted them like searchlights. But the dog pulled ahead on the long reins, as he was bidden to do. He was going home, faithful, wistful hybrid that he was.

And the horse was of that fine mettle which does its best in the face of danger. Therefore he shook himself slightly, gathered his feet and stepped out carefully on the narrow path. Almost fainting, the woman in the saddle shut her eyes and clung to the saddle horn, every nerve in her body stretched to the utmost and her breath held hard.

Once she averted, opened her eyes unobscuredly, and saw the pine tops far below where a cross-gust of wind blew the smoke aside.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Blessed Hain.

At camp at the upper railway John Dally was searching wildly in the crowds of silent, exhausted men for trace of Sandry, of Siletz and of Miss Ordway.

His face was ghastly, for love tore at his heart with double force.

Ma Dally had not seen him for two days and when she met him she said straightly:

"Siletz went into the fire, son, after Sandry. That was hours ago. An' th' Jezebel woman went, too."

That was the hardest knock of the big man's life and he came near not taking it standing. He staggered as from a blow and looked away to the inferno they had left at the north—the great dun canopy that covered the sky.

Then he started on a wavering run among the men, calling for volunteers,

shrieking hoarsely that two women were lost up there and that he was going after them. As he ran, looking up, something fell from the hidden heavens and splashed upon his face. It stopped him in his tracks. Then another fell and another, big, blashing drops that struck him like stones in their portent. They thickened swiftly, beating up the light ashes in tiny puffs, and from the gathered men, busy with roll-call and accounting, there came first astounded exclamations and then, as the drops gathered headway, a mighty cheer that rent the covered skies, even as a heavy clap of thunder shook the hills.

"The rains!" they cried, "the rains! The first rains!"

And it was even so. Nature took a hand and sent Destiny skulking from the havoc of her carnival. The plashings turned to a downpour.

Among the mountains the effect was indescribable. The thing that took place was too big for man to grasp. It was greater than the fires had been alone.

Long sheets of water fell athwart the world, slanting from some tilted sea of the infinite. They dashed in among the canyons, played along the ridges, lashed slope and ledge and valley. The smoke was beaten to the earth in a blanket that spread over a hundred miles and more. It writhed and twisted and was lost in the clouds of steam that fed, blessing, high above the hills. The gods played with the Coast country. Daily turned his face away from any man and the general went to the little south room in the cook-shack for unaccustomed prayer.

The world turned blue with rain as it had been white with smoke.

And the pygmies, men, who had fought so long and failed, tossed their blackened hands in triumph and shout with the last of their voices.

For an hour, two, it rained, until the black spikes on the devastated slopes were blotted out.

"It's mighty unusual, a rain's hard's this—specially the first rains," said a man from Toledo, earnestly. "Don't ever remember one's hard. D'you, Bill?"

Presently, in the second hour of the downpour, a strange procession loomed out of the gray-blue sheets, startling the men who were out in it, too glad to shirk its worst, standing like ducks in the ashmud.

It was the long, shining body of a giant dog, still tugging at the reins tied to his collar, a dripping black horse, tired to the point of falling, and a woman who sat fastened to the cante with strips of broadcloth, and whose face was not good to look upon. It bore upon its features the brand of too much horror.

They flocked around her with cheers and eager hands, and questions that tumbled over each other. But John Dally thrust them all aside to seize her wrist and demand word of Sandry and Siletz.

"They're—up behind—the Hog Back," she shuddered as she spoke that name. "We found Hampden—setting the fires—with candles."

Here there were awed mutterings. "He—shot that—Preacher. He said—the East Belt deed—was recorded all right—but that—he owned—the recorder."

She seemed dully bent on straightening out some tangle. "Sandry is a man—despite all. Get Hampden—if he's alive. No, I don't mean—that. He—sent me down. The horse was—near done." As she slid down into Dally's arms she said with her last ounce of strength but with such commanding spirit that he knew she was in deadly earnest. "Get me—a conveyance—at once. I want to be in Toledo—for the night train—out."

Thus it came, that, as night closed down blue with rain over the tortured country, two things of import to the fortunes of the Dillingworth and its owner were taking place. Poppy Ordway stood on the platform of the dreary station at the lost little town on the backwater, bound for the outside world and the far cities.

At the same moment yet one more procession was coming slowly down from among the peaks, a line of men—a long line, for weary as they were dozens had followed the foreman into the wrecked, mud-deep forest—who bore tenderly among them two slings. It was a significant fact that scattered along that scarecrow line was every man of Sandry's old crews who had gone over to Hampden.

In one sling there swung gently the still figure of the Preacher, his Book upon his breast, its martial flute beside it, its glimmerings of the Past forgotten, its wistful searchings ended.

In the other lay Sandry, his right hand clasping two small dark ones whose owner trudged faithfully beside him refusing all offers of assistance.

A holy joy was in his heart, his lips moved noiselessly in the rolling Latin of a "Te Deum." This was the hour for which he had carelessly learned it at college.

Unashamed he acknowledged the existence of that Power which he had once denied to Siletz.

And the little maid who had lost her soul for love lifted wondering eyes toward the west ridge, hidden in the dim distance, where her sanctuary, the seven-foot fir stump, waited in vain for her rites of worship.

There was a wistful pathos in her calm acceptance of the mighty price which had been asked of her, and yet she was content. She had offered both her soul and body, exalted, glorified, in that she might serve this man.

Where her soul had been there was a sweeping, burning, glorious passion which tightened her clasp on Sandry's hand. Neither she nor the young owner realized that they had exchanged places on the path of life.

The procession, headed by John Dally who carried one end of Sandry's

slings and was filled with a generous joy in that he had found these two alive, wound slowly down from the cup behind the Hog Back, penetrating that fringe of pines at its foot which had formed the trap. They were now but hideous blackened shapes, monsters that towered frightfully into the rain, their bases smoking here and there where a boulder shielded stubborn fires.

Close along the face of the giant cliff they pressed, taking the shortest way.

Suddenly, without warning, they came rull upon a huddled heap that lay at its base. It was pitifully flat and broken, as if it had fallen from

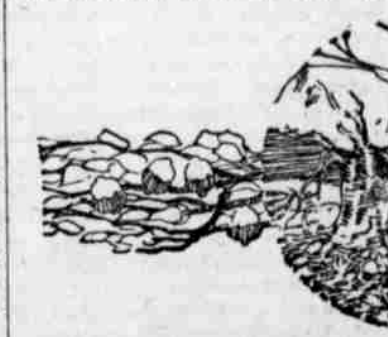


A Huddled Heap Lay at its Base.

a great height, and it bore upon a shoulder a dreary crimson stain, washed and widened by the rain.

Daily halted and sent a cry along the line.

They touched the thing with awed amazement, turning up in the blue dusk



A Huddled Heap Lay at its Base.

They Do Not Take Time for God's Word, is Assertion by New York Pastor.

"Pity the poor rich, for they are the poorest of all. They are barricaded against the Bible. If the Master himself were to undertake to carry his message personally to the hotels and apartment houses of New York he would be turned aside by the doorman with the information that 'No peddlers are allowed.'"

So Rev. Joseph W. Kemp, pastor of Calvary Baptist church, explained to me the Sunday sermon in which he said that "the crying need of religion in this city is to put Bibles in the homes of the wealthy."

"How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven," the divine earnestly quoted. "It is not that the possession of riches is inconsistent with Christianity, but that the rich grow to worship the creature of their own brains—money. They believe that riches may be counted in the palm. This is not so. True riches are within. There are millionaires of the mind, Rockefeller of the soul, and they are found oftener than not among the poor—the rich poor whose doors and whose intellects are open to the Gospel of Christ."

"To what do you attribute the religious apathy of the rich?" I asked Doctor Kemp.

"The rich are obsessed with materialism," Doctor Kemp answered. "They have all the time in the world to read the latest novel, to go and see the latest play, but they have no time for the word of God."—Nikola Greeley-Smith, in New York World

Marketing Farm Products.

United States Senator Fletcher has called a meeting of the national marketing committee to devise means to aid the farmer in marketing his products, and also to enable the consumer to distinguish between the high cost of food and the high cost of service.

"The farmers of the country are producing annually crops for which they receive \$9,000,000,000, and for which the consumer pays, \$27,000,000,000," said Representative W. S. Goodwin of Arkansas, a member of the committee.

"The farmer gets 35 cents and the middleman gets 65 cents for each dollar the consumer pays for the farmer's crops. There is an enormous amount of waste, especially in perishable products, because of the lack of some central directing intelligence."

Where the Iowan Drew the Line.

You may be able to force an old-fashioned man to wear evening dress, but you can't convince him that he is eating dinner at supper time.—Cherokee Times.

the heavy face of the Yellow Pine owner.

Hampden, with the aid of the towering spine and the sheer depths, had made good his words. They would never send him to the chair.

And with the passing of the wondrous face under the disheveled gold hair had gone his last desire.

They hastily constructed another sling and added one more burden to the procession.

So at last and forever Walter Sandry came unto his own. There was yet timber in the Coast country. The East Belt was all but free of the shadow. Those old hidden records should be unearthed through Hampden's boast, or he would file on it legitimately himself, for that confession of Frazer's recorded deed would invalidate the O'Connell filing.

His enemy was gone—in shame and wrath and dishonor. He had won his fight.

That old crime, done in poetic justice under the Right Law of primal man, troubled him not at all, for he saw the glory of his father's face, heard his "I am at peace."

Beside him walked that love of which he had dreamed, the pearl of price which he had so nearly, lost in his blindness. Before him went his tried friend, big John Dally, whose heart had shut on its own pain and opened to him the more.

At the camp waited the white-haired general who was a mother to him.

Here was his life from this time forth, amid the stark forces of a virgin country. The cities were far away, remote.

He had heard the Winds of God upon the Sounding Board of the Hills and they had shown him Dally. He was no longer a questioner, an agnostic. He had come too close to the bare heavens.

Thus he was borne down the dripping valley, filled with a vast peace, content—a Westerner at last.

"Sandy," whispered Siletz, as the procession wound up the slope to the cook-shack, lifting troubled, adoring dark eyes to his, "will it make any difference to you that I have no soul? Will my heart do?"

And Sandy could only hold more tightly the two small brown hands.

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